

# VEGAN BODYBUILDING

## 101 MEAL PLANS, RECIPES AND NUTRITION



PROJECT VEGAN

# **VEGAN BODYBUILDING 101**

**A Guide to Building Muscle, Staying Lean,  
and Getting Strong the Vegan way**

**Project Vegan**

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# **Nutritional Principles and Guidelines for Bodybuilding**

Even as a vegan, I am still inclined to follow the same guidelines that apply to non-vegan bodybuilders when it comes to nutrition. After all, my body doesn't function any different than theirs, and my nutritional goals are not so different either. I eat a similar volume of food that professional bodybuilders do, and my approach to nutrition only varies in that all of my protein sources do not come from meat or dairy. Here's a breakdown of my nutritional guidelines.

## **Small and Frequent Meals**

First I like to schedule my intake about every 2 to 4 hours, which is about 6 to 8 times per day roughly. It is important to keep a continuous flow of nutrients for overall balance, include a mix of: protein, healthy fats, complex and low-GI carbohydrates, and calories.

Following this timing system allows your metabolism to increase, while burning fat and simultaneously fueling your body with the nutrients needed for muscle growth, hence allowing faster muscle recovery, so you can cope with a tough workout regimen.

## **Intake grams of protein per lb of bodyweight**

Ideally, you have to consume 1-1.5 grams per pound of your bodyweight. For instance, in the holiday season I weigh about 180 pounds. 180 pounds of body weight would than mean I require 180 grams of protein. Then following our 1st guideline, I divide this into 6 meals throughout the day, bringing the average to 30 grams of protein per meal. Remember that even while resting, your body is breaking down and building protein. Every 30 grams of protein triggers a surge of protein production that lasts about 3 hours on average.

## **Carbohydrates are essential for muscle growth**

Carbs play an essential role in a vegan diet, because when your supply on Glucose is low; your body will start breaking down fat and protein instead for energy to keep your glucose levels at bay. One of my favorite carb sources is whole-grain bread. It has an abundant source of fiber and low-GI carbs that keep blood sugar levels low. In a mass building phase, ideally, I go for 2 to 3 grams of carbohydrates per pound of bodyweight, at 180 pounds this comes out to 360 to 540 grams per day. I usually don't shy away from the higher amount. Brown rice, plain oatmeal and other whole grains are also great sources for carbs.

## **Consume enough calories**

This area has been particularly difficult for some Vegans. Due to the Vegan diet typically being high in fiber and low in calories, given the nutritional values of whole fruits and vegetables.

Ideally, you should consume 15 to 20 calories per pound of bodyweight. Start at the lowest amount, and leverage your way up or down depending on the growth that you are making. If you are starting to see any increase in muscle growth, you can maintain, or decrease your caloric intake if maybe you are gaining too much fat. If you find that the opposite is happening, you can higher your caloric intake until you find the desired results.

Fat should make up 30% of overall caloric intake. Choose healthy fats mainly from Omega-5' and Omega 3's instead of saturated fats from processed foods.

## Pros and Cons of Going Vegan

### **Possible benefits**

A Vegan diet is generally healthier. Well-planned vegan diets are rich in protein, iron, calcium and other essential vitamins and minerals. These nutrients tend to be low in saturated fat, high in fiber and packed with antioxidants, which can negate some of the western world's biggest health related problems, like obesity, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. But that is not to say it is perfect without any drawbacks. Let's look into some of the benefits as well as cons.

### **Better Digestion:**

This is probably the most obvious one. Your digestion will SKY ROCKET on a vegan diet, no doubt. A vegan diet is rich in fiber, healthy fats, water and healthy plant-based protein. It has nothing that will get in the way of your digestion (unless maybe you opt for highly processed foods, which are harder for your stomach to break down). Just take some caution on fiber intake. Eating slowly and chewing your food well also helps with your digestion, in addition to curbing down hunger. Someone who comes from a habit of eating cheese, meat and milk will certainly benefit from a change to a vegan diet, as they will quickly see how it can heal chronic constipation, as well as keep you from feeling bloated or gassy, heal stomach inflammation, and cure even heart problems.

### **Obesity:**

Be it a young or an old individual, a vegan diet helps fight and avoid obesity. Many studies have shown that vegans, in comparison to people of different diet groups, are less prone to obesity and have lowest body mass index overall. The reason being, is that a vegan's diet consists of much higher fiber foods and bad fats, such as saturated and trans fats. Instead, vegans turn to the healthier kind of Omega fats discussed earlier, which are found in nuts and natural oils, though

they can lead to weight gain when taken excessively.

### **Skin:**

It's no secret, fruits and vegetables are your skin's best friends, so naturally a diet that revolves around them will do wonders for your skin's health. Fat found in animal products causes excess oil production that can lead to clogged pores, which cause acne breakouts. Phytochemicals, enzymes, essential vitamins and antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables also help promote more radiant skin. While fiber found in whole grains also amplifies radiant skin by flushing out toxins. If you want maximum benefits to your skin, you might want to consider drastically upping your intake of raw fruits and veggies.

### **Better Sleep:**

Yes, sleep. Even though a vegan diet may keep you feeling energetic and rejuvenated all day, due to the slowly absorbed sugars in many whole foods, it also fights stress which allows you to sleep better. Plus, you can find a good supply of Vitamin B6, tryptophan, and magnesium in plant based foods that help you keep a healthy sleep cycle. These foods include: Sweet potatoes, cashew butter, peanut butter, bananas, broccoli, avocados, kale, almonds, squash, walnuts, and spinach. Meanwhile, calcium, which aids sleep, can also be found in foods such as almond or soy milk, Kale, Swiss chard, and dried figs, all of which are richer in calcium than dairy.

### **Less Inflammation:**

Inflammation is the body's immunity response to an apparent threat, but what is it that your body thinks is a threat? Initially, scientists thought that the inflammation from consuming meat may have been attributed to just animal protein. However, they also found that dairy products that are high in saturated fat also trigger an inflammatory response from the body. Further research showed that consuming a meal containing animal products causes bacterial

toxins known as endotoxins to enter the bloodstream, that in turn trigger inflammation.

Plant based foods can help manage and lower inflammation. Inflammation is lowered particularly by food high in omega-3 fats like flax and Chia, coupled with chlorophyll found in leafy green vegetables. Legumes and dark green vegetables also increase body's alkalinity to calm down inflammation.

### **Possible Cons**

Some people do find a vegan diet quite depriving, because they do not substitute their favorite foods correctly, or they do not look at it from an ethical perspective. But whether you are vegan for political, ethical or just health benefits, these are some of the common disadvantages with a vegan diet, as far as health is concerned.

#### **Possibility of Lower Testosterone Levels:**

An increase in testosterone levels helps with muscle mass, energy levels, libido, strength, and body fat. Testosterone levels are mainly influenced by saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet. However, these are mainly available in meat and animal products. Aside from this, the amount of fiber in Vegan diets also reduces cholesterol and has been found to be linked to low testosterone levels.

However, in a study published by the British Journal of Cancer and The Oxford Vegetarian Study published by the American Journal of Nutrition, showed that a diet which also includes phytochemicals from fresh fruits and vegetables helps increase testosterone. In these studies, vegetarians were found to have equal if not even higher testosterone levels than meat-eaters, with a plus of being at less risk of heart attack and prostate cancer.

#### **Health Issues:**

Soy comes into the vegan diet quite often. It is high in the female hormone phytoestrogen. Eating small quantities is okay, just like they do in Asia, also you may want to reduce your intake even more for processed soy. As excess intake

can cause cancer, infertility, heart disease, and gains in fat.

### **Potential shortage of certain vitamins:**

For the most part, plant based foods do not naturally contain B12, an essential nutrient. The only way is usually B12 supplement or less healthier processed foods (such as soy milk, mock meats, cereals and brag's nutritional yeast) A vegan diet may also lack in vitamin D although there are vegan sources of these nutrients such as mushrooms and Vitamin D3 supplements.

### **Allergies:**

Having allergies to soy can prove to be quite a challenge on a vegan diet. It will be have to be cautious when consuming your products. Absolutely do not buy any packaged products without a nutrition label, and always be on the lookout for any of the following ingredients if you are allergic to soy:

- Edamame
- Kinako
- Nimame
- Okara
- Soya Natto
- Bean curd
- Yuba
- Soybean

Also lookout for the following as they may also have hidden sources of soy:

- Frozen desserts
- Seasoning & Spices
- Breaded foods

- Soups
- Beverage mixes
- MSG
- Chewing Gum
- Infant formula
- Cosmetics and soaps
- Dressings, gravies & marinades
- Baked goods

# The Animal Protein Myth

How much protein is enough to support muscle growth, or even just to have a long and healthy life? Here we will discuss the common misconceptions about plant proteins and complete versus incomplete proteins.

Very often, people have the idea that plant-based proteins are 'incomplete', making them poorer sources of protein than animal-based proteins. You will also notice that for plant-based proteins to be healthy and 'complete' they have to be taken in combinations which can make it a sophisticated approach.

However, what makes a protein actually "complete"? Proteins have fundamental muscle building blocks known as amino acids. These components connect to conform proteins, similar to cars being connected to build a high speed train or maybe letters of the alphabet put together to create words.

The body has 21 various amino acids, nine of which are labeled essential; these are the ones the body cannot produce out of other amino acids, and so you need to supply them through the food that you consume on a daily basis. A 'complete' protein is one that has 9 fundamental amino acids (Leucine, Isoleucine, Lysine, Methionine, Phenylalanine, Threonine, Tryptophan, Valine, and Histidine) required for the human body. In this sense, all plant-based protein you consume are a 'complete' protein.

However there is a possibility you might experience other imbalances in nutrients, to avoid this, just make sure you are consuming a wide variety of foods and make your plate as colorful as possible, and you have nothing to worry about!

## Vegan Protein Sources:

Here is a rundown of some of the more noticeable sources of vegan protein:

### **Green Peas**

All foods in the legume family are great sources of vegan protein, and peas are

no exception: 1 cup contains 7.9 grams—for comparison that is the same as 1 cup of dairy milk.

## **Quinoa**

This grain is so healthy and delicious that NASA is trying to harvest it for current space missions. Packed with fiber, magnesium, iron, manganese, and of course protein, this grain a great replacement for rice and it's versatile enough to be used as main dish, such as casseroles, or sweet snacks like muffins, fritters and cookies.

## **Hempseed**

This superfood seed has all 9 required amino acids, in addition to plenty of zinc, magnesium, iron, protein, and calcium. As a bonus, these seeds are also a source of essential fatty acids like omega-3's, which are great for overall health and lowering inflammation, as noted earlier.

## **Soy**

Sure this protein has a negative connotation due to it increasing levels of estrogen and possibly being unhealthy when in processed form. However soy is a complete protein and rightfully deserves its status as the main substitute for meat-free products. Tofu is probably the best known soy product. Since we are concerned about protein mainly, it's ideal to choose the firmest tofu possible—the harder the tofu, the higher the protein content.

## **Lentils**

Lentils are essential and can easily be prepared to be eaten on a regular basis. They have a generous amount of protein, as well as being one of the highest alkalizing foods on the planet.

Lentils are also packed with a ton of fiber, in a single 100 gram serving you get 26 grams of protein as well as also meeting your entire daily value of fiber. Due to this, lentils are very satiating, so you probably will not be able to eat a huge

serving size in a single sitting, but adding just a small amount of lentils to your diet is very beneficial.

### **Black beans**

Beans are an essential in most vegan diets, being a part of popular dishes like burritos and black bean burgers, vegans have known what a great source of protein they are for quite some time.

One of the particular health benefits of black beans is their ability to fight diabetes, as they help maintain healthy blood sugar levels. They also help the digestive tract because of their high ratio of protein and fiber, and their lack of fats.

### **Nuts and Nut Butters**

A small batch of cashews, walnuts or almonds provide a quick-and-easy protein fix. Nut butter is great for making your own homemade protein bars (Check the bonus protein bar chapter in this book) or a quick spreaded toast. Indeed nuts are a great on the go way of getting a rich nutritional fix.

### **Greens**

Lastly, greens provide a flavorful and nutritious dose of protein to compliment any dish. It's never a bad time to get some extra greens into your diet. A single cup of Spinach has 7 whole grams of protein, and it's dark leafy green relative kale packs 3 grams per each cup. If you would like to mask the taste, there are tons of ways you can mix greens into a shake, they go great with bananas, soymilk and even apples. Even just cooking a handful of delicious kale chips can give you a fix of delicious protein.

Now, if you've decided to center your diet on foods containing high amounts of essential amino acids. I have compiled a list ranging from the highest content to the lowest, based on nutritiondata.com.

Avocado - 129

Turnip Greens - 128

Spinach - 119

Soy - 118

Black-Eyed Peas - 116

Chia Seeds – 115

Potatoes - 112

Persimmons - 110

Pistachios - 109

Chestnuts – 107

Quinoa - 106

Garbanzo Beans - 106

Kiwi Fruit - 105

Black Beans - 104

Great Northern Beans - 104

Kidney Beans - 103

Spirulina - 103

Cauliflower - 102

Peas - 102

Cashews - 100

Collards - 94

Kale - 93

Asparagus - 93

Pigeon Peas - 91

Navy Beans - 90

Zucchini – 90

Nutritiondata.com lists any food that has an amino acid score above 100 as a 'complete' protein. Now that we know the truth about plant-based proteins, you can be rest assured that you can achieve your bodybuilding goals eating a vegan diet. Have fun!

## To Bulk or To Cut?

Many people believe that protein is only necessary during building up muscle which is untrue.

It is recommended to eat the majority of your protein when you are cutting down on your weight, this is to ensure that while you are cutting down, you are able to preserve the muscle that you have worked for.

As an example, if you regularly eat 1g of protein for each pound of bodyweight as recommend in our diet plan, you'll need to increase it to 1.5g of protein for each pound of body weight when you are cutting down.

Calculating for your daily fat dietary goal.

I will suggest that 20/30% of your calories should be derived from fat. Again, for the purpose of simpler calculations, go for 20% fat.

You can then make adjustments as needed, but I would not go over 30% or any lower than 20%. Example: My current needs for daily calories are 2,400 calories per day. 20% of that is 480 calories.  $480 \text{ calories} / 9 \text{ calories per gram of fat} = 53\text{g}$  of fat per day.

Calculating for your daily carbohydrate requirements.

The remaining calories for you to consume should come from carbohydrates.

Since I usually take 1000 of my calories from protein and 480 of my calories from fat, I would have 920 calories left to allocate for carbs. 920 calories divided by 4 grams per calorie is equivalent to 230 grams of carbs daily.

Using this method, you should now be able to start calculating your macros easily.

The most popular breakdown is 40% protein, 40% carbohydrates and 20% fat - Don't worry if you are a bit off on the exact numbers, each person is unique, and you will find that you have to experiment and adjust accordingly before you find

out what works for you.\*

# Vegan Bodybuilding Mistakes

Here is a list of all the frequent mistakes that vegan bodybuilders need to avoid, in particular, if they want to continue building muscle mass and not suffer an injury in the process. Get rid of these mistakes and see a major boost in your progress!

## **Mistake 1: Not listening to your body**

You are preparing to go to the gym for a chest workout today, but your front deltoids and triceps are still aching from your shoulder workout last night. What's worse, you had very little sleep and are feeling very energy deprived. What can you do?

Many established bodybuilders will go ahead and go to the gym anyway. They live by the philosophy of pushing through hard times which is a good rule to follow, to a point. At a certain point, though, you are only stacking abuse on top of abuse.

You must listen to what your body is asking or begging you to do. Maybe it's hinting that you need at least a day or two of unadulterated rest. Or maybe it's telling you that trying to reach a new plateau for your abilities every day isn't the best idea and that a more periodized program is more beneficial for your abilities and lifestyle.

Athletes are always learning and improving. That is the only way you can avoid injury. Overtraining almost always results in muscle tears, strains and will cost you muscle mass and time. Remember, the immediate term is not important when you are building muscle!

## **Mistake 2: Not training hard enough**

To enhance muscle size and strength developments, you need to push your muscles further than they are acquainted to, the farther, the better.

You specifically need to perform every exercise until you are exhausted in order

to continue in proper form, using weights that are heavy enough so you are only able to perform around ten or twenty slow and steady reps (by slow, I mean you should be taking around three seconds to lift and another three to decrease the weight, and switching direction in between the pumping and lowering movements without bumping, jerking or yanking the weight.)

Don't quit the exercise when your muscles start burning, or you become a bit uncomfortable. This is when the real beneficial work is done, it's the peak moment of the workout. And during the last few and hardest reps, you will get the greatest stimulus for muscle strength and size. And if you cave in at this point during the peak moment, you will not be getting anywhere near the same growth stimulation.

### **Mistake 3: Bad advice**

It's very simple to get misled nowadays. We live in an age of excessive information, and so the best way to avoid this is by getting to know what information is credible. So, how do you find credible information from a reputable nutritionist/bodybuilder? A set of abs? A contest trophy?

Sure, these things might seem like great evidence, but when you consider the contribution of great genetics and the unadmitted steroids a lot of these people in the industry take, they could have achieved those amazing results no matter what, even by following a mediocre plan.

This can be very misleading to the newcomer or a person who has been not been doing a hypocaloric diet for an extensive period of time. The mindset of "their good shape is correlated with what they're selling" can create a confirmation bias with the beginner dieter and furthermore cause them to follow a wrong path.

The harsh truth is, most people showing off their six pack abs couldn't tell you how much protein you need to build muscle, and therefore are not qualified to be giving out advice on your most valuable commodity of all – your health.

## **Mistake 4: Switching routines or exercises constantly**

The greatest gains are made through continuous progress on the most basic exercises over a prolonged period of time. Constantly switching routines prohibits your body from overcoming the initial, audiovisual/skill adjustment stage, and later, the more crucial training that follows.

The notion that you must always change routines to avoid peaks because our muscles become resistant to additional development with certain exercises is because the fastest developments in performance on an exercise regimen happen during the first six to eight weeks. Then it starts to slow down, and switching up the routine ends up fixing the problem.

As discussed earlier, during the beginning stages of performing a new exercise, a bigger percentage of adjustments in exercise are caused by audiovisual/skill adaptations. Following this introductory period of neural audiovisual adaption, your overall performance begins to stagnate, and most of the adaptation starts to occur in the muscles. Here is where the actual progress is made, however, it is crucial to *stick* to that routine during this stage. The progress will be slower than it was in the initial six to eight weeks, but it will condition you to properly adapt to your volume and frequency.

Contrary to popular bodybuilding misconception, your muscles do not stop adjusting to a specific exercise, routine, or method – if a muscle is overworked, it will start to grow, and as long as frequency and volume are kept in check, and you receive the sufficient amount of rest and nutrition, your muscles will develop and grow stronger.

# Best Foods For Vegan Muscle Building

Here we will go through a summary of the best plant based foods for vegan bodybuilders and their specific macronutrient contents, using this nutritional data you can create a healthy plant based bodybuilding diet that fits your own specific goal, getting lean, mass building, or just simple control of your diet.

Fruits (per ounce, 28g)

Food	Calories	Protein(g)	Carbohydrates(g)	Fat(g)
Apricots	50	2.0	12	0.3
Apple	72	trace	19	0.3
Avocado (1/4)	80	1.0	4.0	7.0
Banana	105	1.0	30	0.2
Cantaloupe	9.4	0.1	2.2	1
Grape Juice (100 ml)	45.2	0.59	19	0.08
Grapes	20	0.1	5.4	0.08
Mango	18	0.1	4.7	1
Melon Honeydew	10	0.1	5.4	0.2
Orange Juice	44	0.8	26	0.21
Orange	69	1.0	18	0.21
Pineapple	13.3	1.0	18	0.3

Papaya	10.9	0.1	2.9	0.4
Pear	96	1.0	26	0.4
Plum	30	700	8.0	0.2
Peach	38	1.0	9.0	0.4
Raspberries	14.3	0.4	3.3	0.8
Raisins	86.3	0.7	23	0.2
Strawberries	9.1	0.1	2.2	0.3
Watermelon	8.5	0.1	2.5	0.3

### Vegetables (per ounce. 28g)

Food	Calories	Protein(g)	Carbohydrates(g)	Fat(g)
Asparagus	16	2.0	3.0	0.24
Broccoli	7.7	0.6	1.2	0.5
Beets	2.35	0.8	2.8	0.2
Butternut squash	11.5	0.3	3.0	0.1
Carrot	30	1.0	7	0.1
Cabbage	6.8	0.4	1.6	0
Cauliflower	7.0	0.5	2.0	1.6
Courgette	5.0	0.4	0.9	0.6

Garlic	5.0	0.2	1.0	0
Green peas	24	1.6	4.3	0.6
Kale	6.5	0.6	1.5	0.2
Mushrooms	6.0	0.8	0.8	0.1
Onion	11.5	0.3	2.8	0.1
Potato	161	4.0	37	0.2
Pepper	5.6	0.2	1.3	0.2
Pumpkin	5.6	0.2	1.2	0.1
Potato	24	0.0	6.0	0.0
Romaine lettuce	6.2	0.6	1.2	0.3
Sweet potato	103	2.0	24	0.1
Spinach	7.0	1.0	1.0	0.1
Tomato juice	16	0.8	4.0	0.1
Tomato	33	2.0	7.0	0.2

### Legumes (per ounce, 28g)

Food	Calories	Protein(g)	Carbohydrates(g)	Fat(g)
Black Beans	36.8	2.3	6.5	1.7
Lima Beans	33.8	2.0	6.1	0.5

Kidney beans	34	2.4	8.0	1.5
Lentils	32	2.5	5.6	0.3
Tofu	45	4.9	1.1	2.5
Split Beans	32.4	2.2	5.8	2.3

Nuts Seeds and Oils. (per ounce, 28g)

Food	Calories	Protein(g)	Carbohydrates(g)	Fat(g)
Almond Butter	101	2.5	3.5	9.5
Almonds	183	6.7	6.7	15.6
Flaxseeds (1 tbsp)	59	2.3	4.0	4.0
Olive Oil (1 tbsp)	119	0.0	0.0	14
Peanuts	186	7.8	6.7	15.6
Peanut butter	96	4.0	3.0	8.5
Walnuts	207	4.5	4.5	21.2

Grains, Breads, and Pasta. (per ounce, 28g)

Food	Calories	Protein, (g)	Carbo hydrates(g)	Fat, (g)
Barley, pearl	33.7	7	7.7	0.1

Bagel, plain	190	7	37	1
Brown Rice	31.1	0.7	6.4	0.2
Bran Muffin (1 small)	178	5	32	5
Oatmeal	17.2	0.7	3.0	0.2
Couscous	30.8	1	6.4	1.0
Macaroni (wholewheat)	39.3	1.4	8	0.2
Crumpet	134	4	26	1
Flour, tortilla	146	4	25	3
Spaghetti (wholewheat)	39.3	1.4	8.0	0.2
Corn, tortilla (1)	58	2	12	1
Sourdough Bread	88	3.0	7.0	1.0
Rye bread (1 slice)	83	3.0	16	1.0
White rice	31	0.6	6.8	0.2
Wholegrain Cereal	84	2.0	21.4	0.9

Always choose wisely what you eat, and even more so before and after a workout and you will find that your performance at the gym will improve immensely, and overall you will improve your health.

## Healthy Fats on a Vegan Diet

How can we make sure that we are eating healthy fats? Start by lowering your intake of foods high in saturated fat and trans-fatty acids. Unless you're using large quantities of tropical plant oils (palm oil, coconut oil, and palm kernel oil), Vegan diets are typically naturally low in saturated fat. And they're always cholesterol free.

In less developed countries and regions where native diets are mostly plant-based, and where coconuts and other “plant foods” in which high in saturated fat are staples, the incident rates of chronic disease are considerably low. Contrarily, tropical oils are rare in North American diets, yet the incidents of chronic diseases are much higher. Research suggests that – when taken moderately as part of a whole foods vegan diet – coconut oil and other saturated fat-rich plant-based foods do not increase cholesterol levels or risk for heart attacks.

It's also worth noting that little amount of saturated fat in the whole plant foods may in fact actually be beneficial to vegans. Since these are stable fats that are low risk in damaging your health through oxidation, unlike the polyunsaturated fats that are abundant in non-vegan diets.

Here is a rundown of some of the more noticeable sources of healthy fats in plant foods.

### **Seeds**

Seeds are very popular additions to many dishes — sweets, salads, and bread — or simply enjoyable by hand. Not to mention that the highest source of Omega-3's in the world is found in Saviseeds. Despite fatty fish being the most popular source of omega-3's, these seeds are a much better choice!

Coming in next on the omega-3 list are superfoods “chia” and “hemp seeds”, followed by sunflower seeds which are also a great source of mono-unsaturated fats. It's never a bad choice to add some of these foods as an addition to your

meal.

## Almonds

While all kinds of nuts are reliable sources of healthy fats, almonds are known to be one of the best. For one, they contain fewer calories than cashews, walnuts, peanuts, and hazelnuts, but have more protein. Almonds also come on top of the nut category in nutrition with their high calcium content, as well as copper, iron, zinc, and magnesium. They are also rich in vitamin E and contain fat that is easily absorbed by your body since vitamin E is fat-soluble.

You can have almonds as a snack, or mix them in with cereal. You can also blend almond butter with smoothie recipes, add slivered almonds to salads, or soak raw almonds and make “cheese” out of them.

## Tahini

Tahini is prepared out of sesame seeds and is made of around 50% oleic acid, a mono-unsaturated fat known to be considered as one of the best fats. This is due to its ability to raise blood circulation, while at the same time lowering LDL levels. It also stimulates antioxidant production which helps prevent heart disease. Sesame seeds are also an **excellent and rare vegan provider of iron and calcium.**

## Avocados

About 75% of the calories found in avocado are made of fat; this makes it one of the best fat contents to have in your diet. The fat contained in avocado falls into around 13% polyunsaturated fat, 15% saturated fat and 68% monounsaturated fat. The large volume of LDL in avocados is usually the reason why this fruit is known to reduce cholesterol, as well as the possibility of heart disease. The high saturated fat content in avocados could be worrisome to others but since avocados are so rich in healthy fats, they neutralize any posed risk brought by saturated fat.

## Coconut Oil

Coconut oil was once thought of being dangerous because of its high-fat levels, but recent studies have shown that coconut oil is a fantastic source of medium chain triglycerides, which are processed as fuel in the liver instead of being stored as fat in the stomach such as butter or lard. Coconut oil also contains omega 6 fats which is a great plus.

## **Avoid a Massive Reliance on Processed Foods**

The world we live in is a fast-paced one; we are always on-the-go, so, we tend to take priority on choosing convenience over quality most of the time. This makes it harder for our diet to get an adequate amount of the nutrition provided by whole foods. So to get you back on track, here are some simple guidelines to make sure you transition to a whole foods vegan diet in a simple layout.

### **Pretend Processed Foods Do Not Exist**

This may sound too intense, but don't be discouraged just yet. Imagine rummaging through the store and not finding any pre-packaged food to choose from like frozen meals, cereals, or boxed dinners. Not a single processed granola bar or any food with a lengthy list of ingredients. Now, if these options were not available to you, you wouldn't have a choice but to buy healthier foods.

I am not saying that you should steer away from everything you find packaged or boxed. Foods like hummus, whole grains, protein bars, ground flax or chia, nut butter, salsa, seaweed snacks, frozen veggies, kale chips, frozen fruits, and even non-dairy milk are all completely tolerable (not all of them are inexpensive, though.) The goal is to eat mostly foods that contain five or fewer ingredients. If you decide to keep buying prepared foods, just keep away from those that have overt fats and oils.

### **Plan Your Meals**

It is important to prepare your meals at least a week in advance, this keeps you away from reaching for unhealthy pre-packaged choices any time it's convenient.. Keep your meals and snacks ready to go anytime you want.

If you are short on time, how about using your lunch break, a couple of days a week to stock up on healthy food supplies? Or if that's not enough time, just take a look at your schedule and try to crowbar in some opportunities to do your meal prepping. If all this fails, you can always hire a professional meal prepper from

sites like [www.snagajob.com](http://www.snagajob.com). Sure, it may be expensive but if you value your time, delegating to a freelancer is well worth the money.

### **The bottom line on processed foods**

Think of processed foods not precisely as an addiction, but as a set back to your health almost just as much as drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are. Always choose what you eat wisely, and even more so, before and after a workout. You will find that your performance at the gym will improve immensely and overall, your health will likewise improve.

## Escape the Hardgainers Burden

You want to build up those muscles and get bigger, but you seem to get nowhere more significant from a small frame. You get on that scale with high hopes, but that needle just won't nudge. You keep eating and eating all the calories you can get but the pounds just don't seem to stay and pile onto your thin frame.

If this is the case, is time to bust loose! Here are some tips to help you achieve a bigger frame, be able to do more heavy lifting, and get rid of that hard gainer tag stuck to your name.

### **Get compact, not filled up.**

I cannot imagine that you'd enjoy feeling bloated all throughout the day, every day. Of course not. So to avoid that, you'll want to avoid low-calorie, high-volume food in your meals. This includes low-fat vegan food and salads.

These types of foods will not give you enough calories to meet your caloric target. So instead of that, put more emphasis on including calorie-dense foods in your diet, like healthy fats found in nuts, tofu, and other sources.

To increase the amount of lean muscle mass, most hard gainers would need about 20 calories per pound of bodyweight minimum. So if you are getting all those calories mostly from fruits, veggies, and cooked oatmeal, gaining all that muscle will be an extra challenge for you.

Now I am not saying that these are not healthy choices of foods, but they are just not very helpful for a hard gainer in particular.

### **Prioritize Basics**

When you've established consistency in the core regimen, and you see great results, that is when you can start trying some twists to your training program and see if these changes lead to some extra gains.

When I was a teen, I'd get lost in muscle magazines trying to uncover the secrets

to the perfect training regimen: best angle for incline pressing, training split, the optimal number of sets, the absolute number of reps, the best position for feet to fingers for every exercise, etc.

All I accomplished was just extra stress and confusion. In the end, you'll find that unless you've mastered and consistently perform the basics; all the other things will not matter.

### **Drink some of those Calories**

You will not feel as full with liquid calories compared to solid calories, which make it easier for you to achieve your daily caloric needs.

So try to consume at the least, one more shake in your daily meal plan on top of your pre- and post-workout protein shakes. Moreover, when you do use as much as possible, get as many calorie-dense ingredients in your shake as you can, like ground flaxseed, natural nut butter, ground or raw oats, coconut oil, soy milk, and frozen fruit. You can also add in a fatty weight gainer if you are challenged in achieving your targeted calories daily.

### **Squat Hard, Curl Hard**

If you have fears taking up a leg session, then you are having it too easy. Irrespective if it is squats with a barbell racked in front of your chest, or weighed on your back. Including some big, frightening leg sessions is a must.

High-intensity leg exercises in your routine serve more than just bigger wheels; it is also a significant facilitator for the growth of your whole body.

Hardgainers will always hear "just squat, and everything will grow" as advice, but the truth is. Eventually, the amount of right exercise for their limbs will be more successful in getting results.

Torso muscles are often the points where hard gainers tend to get more stimulation compared to their limbs when completing compound activities. However, having no activity on their limbs while they complete only

combination activities will leave their limbs trailing behind in growth and muscle development, and these are already proportionately smaller to start with.

### **Be Patient, Be Persistent!**

Building muscle does not happen in an instant. It takes time, hard gainer or not. It requires consistency, patience, and hard work.

You play the iron game, and you must play it passion. Moreover, if you find yourself stuck in the mud after a couple of months training, be ready to eat more, level up the weights to lift and eat, eat, eat more.

Never surrender. Level up and take in more calories, heighten your training intensity and improve your gains without any boundaries.

# **Best Fruits for Bodybuilding**

An ideal time to eat fruit is right as soon as you wake up. During sleep, your liver burns up glycogen to supply the glucose your brain needs during your nightly fast. When liver glycogen levels start to drop, your brain receives a signal to start burning muscle protein to convert amino acids into glucose for the brain's use. So as you wake-up in the morning, you are automatically a muscle-burning engine. This early in the day, you will not have to be concerned about fructose being transformed to fat, so eat generously. As a matter of fact the fructose you consume will be useful in resurging the liver glycogen levels, and will switch off the signals sent to your brain to burn muscle protein.

## **Fruits to eat Pre-Workout**

Eating fruit about 30-60 minutes before working out is ideal, especially if you have not consumed a high-carb meal for more than a few hours. The fructose you eat will substitute the liver glycogen used throughout the day; this can then be used to deliver glucose gradually to the muscles that work as you exercise, which also helps spare the glycogen in the muscle cells. This way the muscles do not get fatigued, like what usually happens in a decline in muscle glycogen levels.

### **Best pre-workout fruit choices (pick 1 or 2):**

Watermelon (1 wedge)

Pear (1 medium)

Cantaloupe (1/2 melon)

Apple (1 medium)

Strawberries (2 cups)

Grapes (1 cup)

Raspberries (2 cups)

### **Fruits to eat Post-Workout**

Eating fruit post workout is also great for replenishing your glycogen levels in both your liver and your muscles. Just remember that 2 servings of almost any fruit, provides only about 20-30 grams of carbs. So if you want your diet to be optimized for muscle growth, it is best that you increase your carb consumption to at least 40-100 grams, by adding some starchy calorically dense carbs like potatoes, bread, rice or oatmeal. Or ensuring that the protein powder you consume has at least 20 grams of carbs.

Best post-workout fruit choices (pick 1 or 2):

Peach (1 medium)

Cherries (1 cup)

Cantaloupe (1/2 melon)

Apple (1 medium)

Strawberries (2 cups)

Grapes (1 cup)

Raspberries (2 cups)

## **Potential Nutritional Shortfall for Vegans**

Note that these are all “potential” shortfalls that can be avoided and supplemented for to help support overall good health, and aren’t necessarily true for all vegans. It’s all about doing things right, having a balance and a good mix in your diet.

### **Omega-3 fats:**

A plant based diet is typically challenged in supplying DHA, omega-3 fatty acids or docosahexaenoic acids, all of which are important for healthy eye and brain function. Vegans are advised to consume vegan alpha-linoleic acid sources regularly to ensure an adequate supply. This includes walnuts, soy products, flaxseed, and DHA-fortified vegan food. DHA Supplements are also an option that can be discussed with your physician considering your diet and risk of deficiency.

### **Vitamin B12:**

Vitamin B12 deficiency is known to be one of the biggest risk of vegetarianism or veganism. It can cause anemia, abnormal neurological symptoms and low bone density that can result to bone breakage, and elevated levels of homocysteine that can lead to damage to nerves and blood vessels. Apart from this, most plant-based sources of Vitamin B12 in a vegan diet are referred to as analogs, which is a substance that blocks the absorption of true B12.

Food fortified with Vitamin B12 can greatly benefit Vegans in this light, including soy drinks, nutritional yeast, mushrooms, peas, quinoa, sesame seeds, buckwheat, prunes and seaweed. Note that it is good to spread this throughout your meals as B12 is absorbed best in smaller quantities.

As we age, vitamin B12 absorption in the body declines, so generally, vegan or not, it is advisable to take vitamin B12 supplements. Specifically for vegans, it is generally advisable to consume at least 3 to 10 micrograms of B12 a day, so

when relying on fortified food the amount per serving should also be checked. Supplements are also ideal and can be consumed as 10 micrograms daily. However, it is always best to consult with a physician before taking any supplements.

### **Calcium:**

Often, this is not a challenge for dairy and fish eaters but also not completely absent in a vegan diet. Vegans should particularly ensure they have enough supply of calcium in their diet. Calcium can be found in dark leafy greens along like, kale, and spinach. Also include other good sources of calcium in your diet like soy, tofu and whole grain breakfast cereals and bread, from such brans as Engine 2 and Ezekiel.

### **Vitamin D:**

Generally, Vitamin D is the type of vitamin tricky to be found in food (vegan or not). The most abundant source of it is sunlight. Vitamin D deficiency is mainly associated with calcium deficiency because it gets in the way of calcium absorption resulting to brittle bones. With a good amount of time in the sun, vegans can also avoid Vitamin D deficiency through eating fortified bread and soy beverages, juices, and rice milk, or look into taking Vitamin D supplements as well.

### **Iron:**

A healthy amount and development of blood cells and their function relies a lot on iron supplies in the body. However plant-based food normally contains the type of iron that is harder to absorb for the body in comparison to that found in meat and dairy. However, vegans can find food rich in iron like dark green leafy vegetables and dry fruits, to avoid iron deficiency.

### **Zinc:**

A well regulated immune system needs an adequate supply of Zinc. Plant-based food contains a zinc absorption inhibitor known as phytate or phytic acid, and add to that leafy vegetables that have less zinc content due to a high water content. This makes zinc one of the extra minerals a vegan needs to be particular about in their diet.

Vegans need to include more foods in their diet, rich in zinc like pumpkin seeds, whole grains, nuts, legumes, and whole grain cereals. Other good sources also include brown rice, rolled oats and tofu.

Generally though, studies have shown that vegans aren't necessarily more deficient in Zinc than meat eaters. Research also shows that while lean red meat contains high amounts of Zinc, legumes and whole grain cereals are within its rank in zinc content. Unrefined whole grains have even higher concentrations of Zinc since their outer layer also contains zinc. So generally, vegetarians aren't singled out for this, everyone is advised to be particular about dietary sources of zinc.

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# **Preparing a Vegan Meal**

When it has to do with getting the best results as a vegan athlete, meal prep is a top priority. The benefits are, you won't need to be bothered about meat going bad and it will also save you money, as dairy and meat are not as budget-friendly as vegetables and starches. Nonetheless, you must be cautious about balancing a vegan meal in the same way you balance a meal that includes meat. Here are some tips that will help ease the process.

Universal tips for how to meal prep

- Ensure you have a game plan before stepping out to get groceries, this way you are more likely to follow your plan when you have one.
- Make a list of all the food you require for the week (especially if you are cooking with loaded recipes), and go grocery shopping before time.
- Cooking in batches will save you time during the week.
- Common ingredients are most likely going to be repeated, so if you have to cook everything simultaneously, you may as well double down! The most convenient things to cook in batches include brown rice, veggies, black bean spaghetti, tofu, and sweet potatoes.

## **Methods for preparing vegan food**

There are two different ways I use to carry out my vegan food prep. I normally utilize the "ingredient prep" during warmer months, when I consume lots of fruits and smoothies, and then I use the "meal prep" method in the months that are cold when I consume more curries, soups, stews and other dishes that are hot. If my upcoming week is going to be busy, I sometimes make use of the prep method in periods when the weather is warm also.

## **Vegan food prep ideas**

Here's an account of my typical vegan food prep essentials. Once I have all these ingredients safeguarded in the fridge, I can cook quick meals anytime all through

the week. I do not prep each one of these items every week and ingredients may differ some weeks, but you should be able to comprehend the basic idea. Wash and cut various vegetables, bake some starch-based vegetables and prepare protein-based options like tofu and lentils, then cook some grains if you desire.

- Mince a large bowl of beets and carrots
- Bake some spaghetti squash
- Roast some yams, butternut squash, and sweet potatoes
- Prepare containers using dry ingredients for overnight oats
- Mince up carrot sticks and celery
- Chop a bowl of bell peppers
- Make a bunch of zucchini noodles
- Bake some extra-firm tofu
- Cook an assortment of shelled edamame
- Cook an assortment of grains like rice or quinoa
- Carry some on-the-go fruits like bananas or dates for snacking

## **Bowls/Containers**

After your meals for the week have been prepared, you will need a way to preserve them. Most preppers utilize dishwasher and microwave safe bowls for the sake of easy cleanup and usage. Below are some tips that should be considered when purchasing containers:

### **Types of material**

It is crucial to get containers that are free of BPA. If you are utilizing a plastic container that has BPA, it may add chemicals that are hormone changing to your food if you heat it for long periods in a dishwasher or microwave.

### **Size and number of containers**

Will you be preparing three meals every day of the week, or are you just looking for easy to make simple lunches? Are you planning full meals including sides and entrées, or just a cup of oatmeal and a banana for the morning? Think about the number, size, and the kind of meals you are accustomed to and buy based on

that.

### **Amount of compartments**

Some containers are made up of only one compartment, while others have three or more slots to store food separately. If you are bringing meals like stew or chili or are not bothered by your food touching each other, one compartment may be adequate. But, if you desire to store grains, greens, and proteins separately, search for a container that is bento-style and grouped into slots.

Although some containers are very budget friendly, ranging from \$10-15 for a seven-set container, you should make efforts to purchase the best quality which will benefit you in the long-term. Plastics that are cheaply produced and plastic that is reused from takeout containers will break apart easily. And although it may seem like a frugal choice, it will cost you more in the future when you replace them.

### **Durability of seal**

Saucy or soupy meals that regularly "slosh" need a container that has a tight-fitting seal, unless you want your meal spilling all around the inside of your backpack or bag.

### **Eating to your liking**

Although I suggest preparing meals before time, it is only efficient if you consume them during the week, so ensure you are making plans for food you like.

Yes, green beans can be conveniently prepared because they can be made in large quantities, but if you don't fancy green beans, it won't encourage you to look forward to sticking to your meal.

It's also a good idea to pick out foods you find enjoyable and mix up the combinations and seasoning to ensure you never get bored of their taste.

### **Nutritional needs for macros**

Apart from the comfort of having your meals ready to take from the fridge, meal prep can also aid in achieving various fitness and health goals.

Don't forget that your requirements can also change based on your sex and age; the nutritional requirements of a 19-year-old girl would differ from a 50-year-old man.

Prepping can be done by anyone, but ensure that you spend time figuring out the appropriate macronutrient and calorie intake your body requires.

### **Write down your diet plan in a journal**

The secret to success in starting a vegan diet is not just your food intake; it's also having a precise awareness of what you consume. The human memory on its own is not a reliable enough source of awareness, and because of this, taking precise notes in a food journal is key to your success.

This means every crumb of food and every sip of water you take throughout the day needs to be written. Otherwise, what you learn will fade from your memory as time goes by; this may seem tedious initially, but it will become easier over time.

As a beginner, if you don't have the right guidance or information, you are sailing blind in a storm without a compass, and you are more susceptible to the bad things you are consuming and what is actually working.

Lastly, ensure that you are prepared to snack properly. If you're a real big snacker, avert unhealthy cravings during the day with your kitchen-packed fresh nuts, ripe bananas, dates, dried fruit, and seeds. Having healthy fast food on standby makes it less tedious and extra convenient to snack and be healthy at the same time.



# **A Basic Daily Meal Plan**

So, you are getting a continuous supply of the proteins, fats, carbohydrate, and calories you need to function well. You don't have to follow the same diet every day (as repetition would result in you getting bored quickly), but the purpose of the small six meals and snacks should stay the same. The goal is to avoid simple sugars and carbs and nourishing your body with a variety of different vitamins and minerals. Switch up all your favorite fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and seeds to have various meals.

And above all else, drink plenty of water!! At least one 8oz jug of water with every small meal, one as soon as you wake up in the morning, and another one before you go to sleep. Your body needs to be hydrated in order to function properly.

Breakfast is ideally made up of a source of protein and hemp seeds. Fix up a loaded smoothie made up of frozen bananas, kale, spinach, a few tablespoons of hemp seeds, and any non-dairy milk of your choice. If you are craving something extra, have a piece of your favorite fruit.

## **Snack**

Eat a handful of nuts for a fix of healthy fats – almonds and walnuts are what I would recommend. If you want something more satiating, try having some nut butter (almonds are, once again, a good choice) with wheat bread.

## **Lunch**

Lunch is ideally a mix of proteins and complex carbohydrates. Have a portion of brown rice or quinoa with broccoli and sweet potatoes. If you snacked on nuts instead of nut butter on bread, you can use it to make a wheat bread sandwich filled with hummus, cucumbers, tomatoes and any other of your preferred vegetables. If you're feeling ambitious, you can make homemade hummus out of chickpeas, lemon, tahini, and any amount of your preferred spices, and have it as

an additive for your meals throughout the week.

### **Dinner**

A black bean veggie burger with a side of salad is a great blend of a healthy and satiating dish. Have a variety of kale, spinach and lettuce, then throw in veggies high in nutrients such as beans, tomatoes and carrots. Next, pick a dressing that's not too high in fats or even butter, make a homemade one out of balsamic vinegar and a teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil.

### **Second snack**

End the day with fresh celery and with a dip of a nut butter of your choice or enjoy a healthy hemp protein shake. The key is eating in smaller amounts throughout the day.

# **Eating Cheat Meals and Staying Healthy!**

You can enjoy your guilty pleasures and still lose weight. As incredible as it sounds, there is a strategic way to go about this.

Many people create diets that are so strict that they find themselves breaking all the rules in a very short while. It's actually better to new transitioners to loosen up on these rules. It is healthy to indulge once in a while. The key is moderation and making sure the majority of your calories come from healthy whole foods.

Many dieticians have come to a consensus that it is vital to build muscle in "cheat meal days" since depriving yourself of fatty foods can actually lead to increased cravings, causing you to fail on your diet. Additionally, setting your diet aside occasionally stimulates the thyroid gland and can "re-charge" your metabolism.

## **What you can eat**

As stated earlier, you should avoid processed foods on the days you have set aside as your cheat days. This means you should avoid chips and any other packaged treats from the snack aisle at the grocery store. For clarity, you can have vegan hamburgers, doughnuts, and cookies. But as a rule, do not eat them in their processed forms. For the best results, your cheat meals should be your favorite homemade delicacies.

In conclusion, you can permit cheat meals as a means of aiding your dieting process, and this is the plan you have created and adjusted to for losing weight and becoming healthier. Cheat meals become a problem when you start eating them without any control all through the day. The ideal time for a cheat meal should not exceed 30 to 40 minutes. It is a tough path to follow, but the benefits at the end of your journey are worth it. Your cheat meals will add value to your entire dieting plan if you adhere to the rules of satisfying your cravings moderately.

## **What is the best time to eat a cheat meal?**

While the purpose of cheat meals is to satiate your urge for junk foods, they still need to be eaten in strict moderation. Think of cheat meals as a moment to indulge in “bad” carbs, fats and proteins. For some people, that means switching from complex carbs to simple carbs or adding extra guac to that vegan burrito. Also, always eat your cheat meal after a workout when your body can best absorb both “good” and “bad” macros.

## **The 90/10 rule**

Remember the most important thing: A cheat meal is a single meal only! Not strictly following this rule can break your entire diet. Experts agree that proper diets should follow the 90/10 rule, meaning 90 percent of the diet should be based on healthy food, and the remaining 10 percent can be focused on cheat meals. For example. If you follow a diet that consists of five small meals a day, that means with the 90/10 rule, you can use around 3 to 4 meals a week out of your 35 total to satisfy your junk food cravings.

## **Plan around special occasions**

Birthdays, weddings and other gatherings and celebrations are notoriously harsh for people sitting on the sidelines watching others eat. Because of this, it is advisable to schedule your cheat meal for the exact day of a special event, in case it is coming up. However, try to stick to that one meal only, as opposed to other people at the gathering who might adopt an all-you-can-eat mentality.

## **Let go of the perfectionist streak**

When you are indulging in cheat meals, you must seize the opportunity and enjoy it. Many people might even feel guilty after eating a cheat meal, no matter how prepared they were or how well they planned it out.

Most people fail at a diet because their expectations are too high and go all in or nothing. It's impossible to always be perfect, so it is best to nip the perfectionist mentality in the bud for the sake of your health in the long run.

## **Bodybuilders Pre-competition Diet**

There are many different ways bodybuilders get tremendously lean for their shows. They follow a typical diet of rich protein, moderate carbs and low fat. When a show is coming, they tend to reduce their caloric take from all the sources progressively week by week to ultimately accomplish a single digit body fat, referred to as contest shape.

### **Step 1: Starting the Diet**

When a bodybuilder chooses a contest to compete in, he/she starts dieting 12 to 20 weeks before the show; this depends on the amount of body fat required to lose. On average, a bodybuilder will target losing about 1 to 2 pounds of fat total, while keeping as much muscle mass as possible. A bodybuilder can afford to lose about 1 pound of muscle for every 3 pounds of body fat they lose. Stretching the diet out for a long period of time helps bodybuilders not have to go on a crash diet in order to reduce a large amount of fat in a short time.

### **Step 2: Drastically Decrease Your Carbohydrate Intake**

By the time you decide that it is time to change your main goal from building muscle to building muscular definition in order to be prepared for competition, you should lessen your day to day carb consumption to 0.5 grams per pound of bodyweight. This seems drastic, but you will need to decrease it even further as you approach the contest date.

At exactly the week before the competition, you need to reduce your carbohydrate consumption even more. You can achieve this by eating 1 cup of veggies per meal. Aside from this, you should only get carbs from simple carb sources such as cereals and processed sugars, but keep it to only about 20-30 grams after a workout.

Normally this would be considered draining, but you'll need it to deplete the glycogen your muscles have. Glycogen is what your body uses to store

carbohydrates that come from everything you eat, from sweets and fruits to potatoes and bread.

The primary reason for draining glycogen levels is to enhance fat burning. Without glycogen, your body will instead resort to using fat for energy. Removing glycogen levels will also result in less water retention in your muscles. When you increase your carb intake later, your muscles will have the ability to keep more glycogen and water than before, which will then increase their size.

## **Bodybuilding workouts for beginners**

There is no doubt about it: Bodybuilding is an intimidating task. When starting your bodybuilding journey, you need to start out on the right foot to prevent burning out in the long term. Many aspiring bodybuilders begin with regimens that are too intense for what they're used to, and the result is failure and burnout.

A great program that uses simple techniques will aid the beginner bodybuilder to establish that important muscle mass and core strength. The number of days you will have to train, and their gap will vary based on your schedule. It is advisable to start with an easy, simple, every-other-day whole body regimen.

This plan has a diverse amount of basic exercises that focus on the entire body through the training regimen. The exercises should be continuous, and each should be different from the last. For a beginner, the following exercises mixed with a healthy diet like this book recommends will get you great results in a few months.

This program consists of the following:

## **Workout 1**

- 3 set bench press of 10 reps
- 3 set squat of 10 repetitions
- 3 set crunches for 20 repetitions
- 3 set deadlift of 10 reps

## **Workout 2**

- Incline bench press with dumbbells for 3 sets of 10 reps
- Overhead shoulder press with dumbbells for 3 sets of 10 reps
- 3 set barbell rows of 10 reps
- 3 set stiff legged deadlift for 10 repetitions
- 3 set calf raises for 15 repetitions
- 3 set leg press for 10 repetitions

## **Workout 3**

- 3 set tightly gripped bench presses for 10 reps
- 3 set barbell curls for 10 reps
- 3 set leg extension for 10 repetitions
- 3 set frontal pull downs for 10 reps
- 3 set crunches for 20 repetitions

A weekly breakdown doing these workouts would look like this:

- Monday: First workout
- Tuesday: First relax day
- Wednesday: Second workout
- Thursday: Second relax day
- Friday: Third workout
- Weekend: Relax days

This is good for beginner bodybuilders, but as the difficulty increases and you become adjusted to more heavy lifting, you will have to find more relaxing time between muscle groups. If your regimen allows an extra workout day every week, look at separating your workouts into lower body/upper body splits.

This enables you to prioritize a little more on each individual workout and extra relaxing time in between some of the body workouts, which means every workout can be a little more challenging.

Here is an example of what it would look like:

- 3 inclined bench press of 10 reps
- 3 set pectoral flys of 10 reps
- 3 set pullups of 10 reps
- 3 set military press of 10 reps
- 3 set deadlift of 10 reps
- 3 set barbell curl of 10 reps
- 3 set crunches of 20 reps

Tuesday:

- 3 set squat of 10 reps
- 3 set leg curls of 10 reps
- 3 set leg press of 10 reps
- 3 set calf raises of 15 reps
- 3 set leg raises of 20 reps

Wednesday

- Relax
- Thursday
- A repetition of Monday
- Friday
- (A repetition of Tuesday)
- Saturday and Sunday
- Relax

Whatever regimen you choose, it is important to first warmup and stretch no

matter what before you start your workout to get your blood flowing so your body is in optimal shape during the workout. Also, each workout should be accompanied by around 20 minutes of cardiovascular workouts to further prevent injury.

Keep it simple at first. Don't go all out on the isolation exercises and concentrate on fusion multi-joint workouts. A great starter routine needs to be continued for the first 8 to 10 weeks in order to allow sufficient time for the body to accommodate to the exercises and grow a solid foundation of strength and mass. Once that is achieved, workouts can be switched and the format arranged slightly.

## Go Vegan For Your Health!

With more and more information becoming readily available on the internet about the benefits of going vegan, more people are converting to a vegan diet for better health.

A well-planned vegan diet contains high protein, calcium, iron, and other essential vitamins and minerals. The sources of these nutrients are also high in fiber, low in saturated fat and packed with antioxidants and enzymes that help and even cure some of the modern world's most prevalent health problems like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer.

### **Preventing Cancer**

Researchers and Scientists from England and Germany have found that vegetarians have a 40 percent less chance of developing cancer compared to meat-eaters.

In the United States, studies covering the Seventh-Day Adventists have shown a substantial decline in cancer risk among those who avoided meat. Likewise, breast cancer occurrence is also drastically lower in nations that follow plant-based diets like rural China and Vietnam.

Cancer Research UK has reported Japanese Okinawan women who ate meat in equivalent amounts to western diet were found to be at risk of developing breast cancer at eight times higher than women who followed the traditional Okinawan plant-based diet. On top of this, meat and dairy products have preservatives and cooking them forms carcinogens which contribute to many forms of cancer including colon cancer, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and prostate cancer.

Diets high in saturated fat also promote an over-production of estrogen, particularly estradiol in the body. And elevated amounts have been associated with breast cancer. Also, a recent study showed that dairy products are connected to an elevated risk of ovarian cancer. This is due to the body breaking down milk

sugar/lactose into galactose, which causes damage to the ovaries.

To conclude, a study including tens of thousands of people in Harvard has shown that regular consumption of meat increases the risk of developing colon cancer by about 300%. That's pretty conclusive evidence showing the correlation between meat and certain cancers from the most prestigious University in the world.

A vegan-diet is devoid of the animal fat connected to cancer. Plus it includes an abundant intake of vitamins, fiber and phytochemicals that prevent you from getting cancer. Furthermore, a blood sample analysis of vegans from the same University shows that they have an elevated level of "killer cells," which are particular white blood cells that go after cancer cells. Kind of like the black ops or elite forces of the body.

### **Beating Heart Disease**

Heart disease continues to be at the top of the list of deadly diseases around the globe.

A vegan diet is no doubt a very powerful protective shield against heart disease. This is in fact, supported by an 11-year study conducted by Oxford University. This study included 45,000 volunteers and found to cut their risk of developing heart disease by 32% by simply going vegan. Since animal-based food sources tend to be high in saturated fat and cholesterol, it is naturally expected that these are the major causes of artery-clogging plaque.

In addition to this, research by scientists of JAMA Internal Medicine from Japan and the United States supported a vegan diet through a meta-analysis of 39 hypertension studies from 18 different countries, involving a total of more than 21,000 participants. They found that people who excluded meat from their diet consistently had healthier blood pressure levels regardless of the amount of sodium consumed in a vegan diet, these results were very conclusive.

Knowing what meat and dairy does to our body in comparison to fruits,

vegetables and other plant-based foods, it's easy to see why vegan diets work so well. Avoiding meat, dairy products and added fats decrease the blood's thickness which would, in turn, lower blood pressure. Plant-based foods generally have low saturated fat and sodium, as well as zero cholesterol. Plus, vegetables and fruits have high amounts of potassium that help lower blood pressure.

### **Reverse and Prevent Diabetes**

Diabetes comes next in the diet-related killer list around the world after Heart Disease. A healthy vegan diet can enormously improve and control blood sugar levels, and it has been reported to potentially cure diabetic patients.

Dr. Neal Barnard, President of The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, showed in his study how patients diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, significantly controlled diabetes and lost weight turning to a vegan diet. In this study, he divided participants as 2 split groups. The first group was asked to follow a S.A.D (Standard American Diet) non-vegan diet plan issued by the American Diabetes Association, while the 2nd group was asked to follow a low-fat plant-based diet.

43% of the group placed on a low-fat plant-based diet was able to manage their diabetes with reduced medication dosage as a result, while only 26% of the group placed on the ADA recommended diet achieved this. Additionally, the group who turned vegan also had positive weight-loss and reduced both their blood pressure level and cholesterol.

Dr. Bernard encourages diabetic patients to consume low-fat vegan foods like sweet potato cassarole, black-eyed peas (lobia), spinach salad, and crushed date and banana oatmeal. He additionally recommends people stay away from food containing a high content of saturated fat. This includes processed sugar, most flour products, and most non-whole grain cereals.

If you are diabetic or worried you might be at risk of diabetes, it's particularly

ideal for you to choose food from these 4 food groups:

- **Grains:** brown rice, pasta, oatmeal, bulgur wheat, whole grain cereals, corn, couscous, millet wheat etc.
- **Legumes:** mostly all beans (black, pinto, kidney, garbanzo, white, etc.), lentils, low-fat soy like tofu on occasion.
- **Fruit:** All fruits except for olives, avocados, pineapple, and watermelon. Good choices of fruit include: bananas, grapes, apples, pears, oranges, peaches, melons, kiwi, grapefruit, and berries.
- **Vegetables:** All veggies except for white potatoes. Best examples are: cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, kale, spinach, collards, green beans, squash, bok choy, artichokes, and sweet potatoes.

Foods like these are essential vegan staples, and aside from being very healthy choices of food, they are much less costly than animal products, even more so when you consider the savings you'll get on diabetes medication and other taxing healthcare bills.

### **Lighten your mood**

On top of transforming your body, consuming more plant-based food can have a strong impact on your mind.

The British Journal of Health Psychology published a study that covered almost 300 young adults who kept daily food diaries for three weeks. Moreover, these journals included mood ratings. What scientists found is that higher amounts of plant-based food consumption brought about an increase in energy, calmness, and extreme feelings of happiness. These benefits not only had an impact on the days that the volunteers consumed fruits and vegetables but it was also felt through the following day.

According to the most recent data, about 75% of Americans fail to meet the minimum recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Consuming

more plant-based meals can help bridge the gap even more.

## **Go Vegan for Your Wallet!**

Regardless of budget, Veganism can easily be tailored to fit into your life style. It's a falsa misconception eating a vegan diet is costly and only for upper class who regularly shop at whole foods. Quite contrary to this, vegan diets are easy to accommodate when living and eating on a budget. Foods that are staples in a whole foods vegan diet are anything but a strain on your pocket.

One specific example, starchy carbs, are both filling and very affordable, even the more nutritious kinds like whole-wheat flour or brown rice. Starch is a staple that goes well with almost any meal and is a norm in many countries with a history of great health. And if you're trying to avoid processed foods or gluten, veggies like potatoes, sweet potatoes and other starchy root vegetables are even more affordable. You can also opt for seeds, beans, and legumes for your carb sources since they are also packed with protein.

Living on a budget doesn't limit how many amazing vegan meals you can make. Later in this book, we have a chapter showcasing the various healthy, affordable and delicious vegan meals you can make on a budget.

### **Tips on seasonal fruit and buying in bulk**

A more budget-friendly way to buy is consider buying in bulk; beans in particular are cheaper when bought in large quantities. You can buy in bulk and keep them in container like a mason-jar, something with a tight clamping lid for a vacuum seal, this way you can keep the bean's freshness for up to a year. Beans can come in bags as large as 20 pounds. It's the largest I've seen for the pinto beans that I buy. You'll find that this comes up to just about a dime for every 4 ounce cooked serving.

And when it comes to fruits, it is always budget friendly to buy what's in season; not only will they be friendlier to your pocket, they are even tastier than out of season fruits, go for essentials like bananas, dates and apples which are always on sale at certain stores.

If you are on a budget, you might want to stay away from Trader Joes and Whole Foods and instead checkout your local farmers market for fresh whole foods. Or if you can, buy directly from the farmer, it will be a lot cheaper and you can have access to 'second harvest' at a discount. If you do choose to shop at major retail stores, you can opt to go for the frozen fruits and veggies; as they are always usually cheaper than fresh fruit. Of course eating fresh as much as possible is always best, but your budget should also be a priority as financial well being is an important part of overall health as well.

# **How to Make the Transition**

It can feel insanely overwhelming when you're just starting to go vegan. It is a drastic change in lifestyle compared to having the convenience of being able to eat almost anything as an omnivore, especially for people who enjoyed and are used to eating meat and animal products their whole lives. It might even feel almost impossible. Below, we will go over some tips, so you do not get overwhelmed or be too hard on yourself in your transition.

## **Specify your start date; the sooner you start the better**

When and if you do decide to start eating a vegan diet, empty your refrigerator of all the meat and animal products, including dairy, fats (like butter) and eggs. Then do the same for your pantry and throw out all the canned or boxed goods that have meat or animal products. You'll want to do this all at the same time. Say your goodbyes to the whole unhealthy lot. Toss them or give them to the local food shelter.

Then use recipes from this or any of your preferred vegan cookbooks, or get online where there are many resources for unique and creative vegan meals. You will find that veganism is very accessible as long as you look for opportunities.

Draw up a meal plan for your first month to include all the meals you'll have each day: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. And with this new meal plan, you can now create your grocery list and source your foods for the week.

## **Don't expect perfection**

Lastly, you can expect that you will slip on a vegan diet, regardless if you have or have not yet. After all, we are human. And it's not just our mindset; it's also our body adjusting, from your palate to everything inside your body. My advice is, don't dwell on the times you slipped up, but focus on all the good and healthy choices you've made outside of that one mistake. Remember, it will take more than one slip up to take away all the progress you've made.

Every day as a vegan will reduce your cravings, and you will gradually move towards more healthy food. You will be amazed by how your palate adapts when given the chance.

# **Vegan Food Substitution Guide**

Being vegan does not mean you have to let go of your favorite homemade recipes and comfort foods. Fortunately, thanks to the rising popularity of veganism, many companies are creating vegan substitutes of their most popular food products, that are constantly evolving and improving in the modern age, which makes being vegan very convenient!

## **Cheese**

When buying vegan cheese, check the label no matter what the cheese is labeled, as some contain casein which is an animal by-product. There are a wide variety of vegan cheeses such as Swiss, sliced and parmesan which you can use in the same way you would dairy cheese. If for whatever reason the faux-cheese taste is not to your liking, you may want to add some salt or herbs to spice up the taste.

## **Honey**

While the ethical use of honey is debated in the vegan community, it cannot be argued that the bee population is decreasing. The best way to not contribute to this is obviously by not taking their food away, as bees makes honey to feed themselves for survival primarily. Fortunately, there are various replacements for honey such as maple syrup, agave nectar or date paste. These stand alone for their compatible sweetness to honey as well as their health benefits.

## **Milk**

Perhaps the most simple food to substitute is milk. In fact, there are more vegan variations of milk than there are regular milk, which include rice, soy, almond and oat milk. As for buttermilk, add 1 tbsp of vinegar in a measuring container and mix in soy or any non-dairy milk variety you desire, or as the recipe specifies to make your own homemade variety.

## **Eggs**

One of the best alternatives to scrambled eggs is tofu. You can choose to make it on your own through a recipe or purchase a tofu scrambler, which you add with the tofu while cooking. You might make this a staple of your diet if you consume a diet high in protein.

## **Meat**

Lastly, probably the most important staple of vegan foods are meat substitutes. Pretty much any meat-based meal can easily be veganized. Sure, it can be a bit inconvenient because you will be making a recipe from scratch, but the health and ethical benefits are worth it. Check out brands like Morningstar, Boca Burger and Toffuti for veganized versions of all your favorite foods!

## **Conclusion**

Looking for veganized versions of animal products is probably the most difficult part of preparing vegan foods, especially if you are just trying these foods out for the first time. But it can also be exciting to mix up some long-held eating habits and getting amazing health benefits in the process. All it takes is a stroll down your local supermarket or health food aisle and you can see all the veganized substitutes for yourself.

## Vegan Supplements for Muscle Gain

Branched Chain Amino Acid BCAA is known to protect muscles from the declining effects of a diet low in calories and can aid your muscle mass gains. According to a study published 2010 in the Med Science Sports, BCAA can reduce muscle pain aches after periods of vigorous exercise. It's advisable to take five to ten grams of BCAA during breakfast, followed by five to ten grams during and post exercise, and five to ten grams right before going to bed.

**Creatine** – Creatine is perhaps the most well-studied and most consistent form of supplementation for a bodybuilder's athletic performance. It is especially important for vegans and plant-based dieters. It is also only primarily found in meat, making it much more important for vegans and plant-based eaters. Supplementation helps aid the body's lean muscle mass and, according to a study done by the International Study of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, scientists concluded that baseline creatine stock is lower in vegan and vegetarian athletes than in meat-eating athletes. They recommend supplementing creatine monohydrate to increase your adaptation to resistance training which is done by easing differences in lean muscle mass and augmenting muscle fiber mass and prevention of weariness.

VeganHealth.org recommends the following treatment advice, “It's not advisable to take in twenty grams of creatine following an introductory loading period, which is usually around a week or less. After that, around five grams or less daily is recommended.” I would like to add that larger built bodybuilders can upgrade that amount to ten to fifteen grams daily. If you start getting an upset stomach, you should gradually scale it down until it's no longer a problem. Bodybuilding.com suggests “5 grams per day for around 28 days to increase creatine deposits.”

**Rhodiola Rosea** - In a study done by the Journal of Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, scientists discovered that young healthy adults who ate Rhodesia

rose 1hr prior to exercising drastically improved their endurance capabilities. Research also showed that the subjects reported experiencing less fatigue after ingesting around 50 mg of Rhodiola Rosea every day, although the usual recommended dose is among 200 mg/400 mg. However, coffee is also a good substitute for Rhodiola Rosea, and many people are able to sleep better with it, not to mention organic coffee is packed with healthy components and has an excellent safety profile.

**Flaxseed Powder** - (Omega-3 Fats) – Many vegan bodybuilders do not directly need to supplement omega-3's as they get them by consuming plants, but not all bodies produce sufficient levels of omega 3's because of genetic disparities. Bodybuilders require omega-3's to lessen oxidative stress. In their journal, “Fueling the Vegan Athlete,” Dr. Deana M. Ferreri and Dr. Joel Fuhrman recommend consuming a vegan algae-based supplement. Ground flax has a great fiber content and is lighter on the digestive tract. Omega 3's can also come from walnuts, soy products, flaxseed, and DHA-fortified vegan food. DHA supplements are also an option that can be discussed with your physician considering your diet and risk of deficiency. You can always consume omega-3's as soon as you wake up, after exercising, and before bed.

**Curcumin** - According to a study done by the Journal of Pain Research, 400mg of curcumin was equivalent to consuming 2,000g of Tylenol. Curcumin has been shown to be effective for combating the kind of pain, muscle strains and soreness you get after initiating a new workout routine.

Since curcumin is ingested poorly by itself, you will need to consume a supplement with soy lecithin or curcumin nanoparticle to enjoy the maximum benefits of this nutrient. Even more important, it's fat-dissolved so you will be able to absorb it much easier if taken with a high-fat meal.

**Vitamin D** - The majority of Americans get their Vitamin D from sunshine, and the only important vitamin D sources in foods are eggs (through chickens fed with Vitamin D), fatty fish (e.g. mackerel, sardines, cod liver oil), and

mushrooms (if exposed to UV rays). Plant-based diets offer little to no Vitamin D unless it's though fortified foods or supplements.

Bodybuilders require Vitamin D to build and repair muscles and bones and to tolerate high-intensity exercises. People who suffer from Vitamin D deficiency commonly experience bone aches and muscle fragility. The most accurate way to detect if you suffer from this deficiency is by submitting to a hydroxy vitamin D blood test. The standard level for healthy people is 30 ng/mL-74 ng/ml; any levels lower than this range reveal a deficiency.

**There you have it. You are now well on your way to building muscle the Vegan way!**

**Be prepared to feel great, have energy and get the best results as an vegan bodybuilder in your life! Thank you for taking the time to read my book and stay tuned for more books on Veganism in the future.**

**If you enjoyed my book and would recommend it to anyone. I'd be very grateful if you can leave a short review on Amazon. Your feedback is really important, and I will use the opportunity to further improve this book even more in the uture.**

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